

**Opening Statement
Chairman Tom Davis
Committee on Government Reform
“Winning the Peace: Coalition Efforts to Restore Iraq”**

October 8, 2003

I would like to welcome everyone to today’s hearing on the U.S.-led coalition efforts to restore peace, freedom, security, and dignity to the people of Iraq. On August 24, I led an eleven-member bipartisan delegation to see first-hand our efforts in Iraq. Before leaving the U.S. I had no real idea of what to expect on my visit. After all, most press accounts of our efforts in Iraq were full of gloom and doom. But, what we witnessed was an Iraq of great promise, vibrancy, and vitality.

We saw a nation with potential and a people that were enjoying the fruits of freedom in its infancy. We saw remarkable progress throughout the country – whether it was a hospital in Baghdad or a new police station in Mosul.

We witnessed a busy market in Mosul where one could buy anything under the sun, including items that were forbidden under Saddam Hussein’s regime, such as satellite dishes. We met with newly elected regional council members – men and women, Kurds, Shia’s and Sunni’s – who spoke of embracing democratic values and representing all of Iraq, not just their own religions, tribes, and home towns.

We also witnessed the greatness of our military – not of their might, but of their humble actions in assisting a people in need. Our soldiers are firm in their resolve to stay until the job is finished. These young men and women are not only soldiers but also peacekeepers, and when called upon, diplomats and friends. Let there be no doubt: We still have a lot of work ahead of us. Our military is still in harm’s way, but from what I have seen we can be successful as long as we remain steadfast, patient, and committed.

The Coalition’s work is far from over. Iraq is still a work in progress, and new challenges arise each day. We must overcome the many security threats that, to this day, continue to be the

greatest challenge to our troops and to the stabilization of Iraq. Rebuilding efforts, although well under way and perhaps well ahead of schedule, will not succeed in the end if we cannot overcome the prevailing threats against those who are there to help.

While I am confident that we will succeed in ridding Iraq of elements that want to see the coalition fail, we need to keep in mind several important lessons, such as:

- While the rotation of military forces in Iraq is essential, increasing the number of military personnel in the area may not be necessary or advisable to accomplish the mission.
- Reconstituting a qualified and effective Iraqi military police force and border protection guard is a key element to improving overall security in Iraq. The development of functioning institutions in a secure environment is essential to Iraq's progress. Furthermore, the sooner Iraqis can take responsibility for their own affairs, the sooner U.S. forces can come home.
- For human intelligence to improve, we need the participation of Iraqi-Americans who have the skills, knowledge, and willingness to assist in intelligence gathering and analysis. However, we need to actively recruit, vet and train these individuals. In order for these people to be effective, we need to expedite the security clearance process.
- Iraqi citizens can provide vital intelligence about the whereabouts of weapons of mass destruction, but the coalition forces need the authorization to grant relocation and protective status to informants and their extended families.
- Saddam Hussein misappropriated much of the money loaned to Iraq for his own personal benefit to the detriment of the Iraqi people. My colleague Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney has introduced H.R. 2482, which could greatly benefit the people of Iraq by canceling Odious Debt in accordance with customary international law.

While operations in Iraq are still young – we are only 160 days into the rebuilding effort – we have accomplished much. We are building schools, upgrading hospitals, and modernizing the

utilities infrastructure at a pace that surpasses operations we led after World War II, and we are well ahead of the pace of our reconstruction efforts in the Balkans.

Still, most of the media accounts of post-war Iraq discuss rampant chaos and mismanagement. However, according to a public opinion poll conducted in August by the Zogby Group, more than two-thirds of those Iraqis who expressed an opinion wanted Coalition troops to remain in Iraq for at least another year, and 70% of Iraqis said they expect their country and their personal lives to be better in five years.

During our visit to Iraq, the delegation visited a site southwest of Baghdad, in a sector guarded by the U.S. Marines known as Al-Hillah. One cannot begin to describe this site. There are no landmarks to identify its location but we know of this place because once we overthrew Saddam, the Iraqi people themselves were our guides.

In those early days after we swept threw this area Iraqis by the dozens came to Al-Hillah to do something that is hard to put into words – they dug. Yes, many came to this non-descript place to dig, many with their bare hands. They dug because it is here where we learned of Saddam's brutality. Al-Hillah was a killing field.

For reasons unknown except to Saddam and his henchmen, men, women and children were summarily executed over a span of many days. They were buried, and the process was repeated time and time again – people buried on top of one another.

This was a scheme designed by a sociopath bent on crippling the Iraqi people. Now, the people return, most with kitchen utensils and their hands, to find and dig up remains of loved ones. Under the protection of coalition forces, Iraqis are learning what it means to be free. Our role in Iraq has just begun, and it is a new fight – a fight that is far greater than simply ridding Iraq of Saddam Hussein. We need time, patience and most of all, the resolve to finish the job we started. The people of Iraq deserve no less. Our men and women serving in Iraq want to finish the job, and we need to support them while the Iraqi people savor freedom, and bring stability to a region that desperately needs it.

Through this hearing, the Committee hopes to gain insight from the on-the-ground experience of the people performing reconstruction projects in Iraq as well as the viewpoints of Iraqi-Americans, scholars, and others who have recently observed the reconstruction process. I also welcome my colleagues, many of whom are not members of this committee but have traveled to Iraq and have their own views, emotions and experiences they want to share.

With that in mind, we have assembled an impressive group of witnesses to help us assess our efforts and progress in Iraq. We will hear from the Department of Defense and the Coalition Provisional Authority. We will also receive input from some distinguished Iraqi-Americans as well as a constitutional scholar who will provide us her thoughts regarding the inclusion of women's rights in the yet-to-be-determined Iraqi constitution.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for appearing before the Committee, and I look forward to their testimony. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome the many non-committee Members attending today's hearing.